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CTENOTUS GREERI, A NEW SCINCID LIZARD FROM WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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INTRODUCTION

In October 1975 Dr A.E. Greer of the Australian Museum collected seven specimens of a strange *Ctenotus* on the Warburton-Rawlinna track through the Great Victoria Desert. He kindly sent them to me for description, but I was unable to convince myself that they were not a peripheral variant of *C. leonhardii*.

In March 1979 the Biological Survey of the Western Australian Museum collected eight specimens of a skink that was very like Dr Greer's and almost certainly conspecific with it. However the Biological Survey obtained at the same locality a series of *C. leonhardii* (and of *C. uber*), which proved the distinctness of the strange skink. I name this skink after Dr Greer in recognition of his many contributions to the classification of the Scincidae.

CTENOTUS GREERI SP. NOV.

Holotype

R65980 in Western Australian Museum, collected by the Biological Survey of the Western Australian Museum on 22 March 1979 at 9 km S of Mt Linden, W.A., in 29°24′S, 122°20′E.

Diagnosis

A member of the *Ctenotus leonhardii* species group, very like *C. leonhardii* but with fewer midbody scale rows, wider vertebral stripe and a dorsolateral

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series of white dots or short dashes. Distinguishable from *C. uber* by well-developed midlateral and vertebral stripes.

Distribution

Known from two widely separated localities in the arid south-eastern interior of Western Australia.

Description

Snout-vent length (mm): 43-51 (N 8, mean 48.0). Length of appendanges (% SVL): foreleg 27-30 (N 6, mean 28.8), hindleg 46-53 (N 7, mean 49.4), tail 184-228 (N 5, mean 204.0).

Nasals in short contact or narrowly separated. Prefrontals usually narrowly separated (in contact in two specimens). Supraoculars 4, first three in contact with frontal. Supraciliaries usually 7, occasionally 8. 'Palpebrals' (upper ciliaries) 10-12 (N 6, mean 11.0). Second loreal 1.3-1.8 times as wide as high (N 7, mean 1.51). Presuboculars 2. Upper labials 8. Ear lobules 5-7 (N 6, mean 5.7,

Plate 1: A paratype of *Ctenotus greeri* from Mt. Linden, photographed in life by G. Harold.

obtuse or subacute, third usually largest). Nuchals 2-4 (N 7, mean 3.3). Midbody scale rows 24 or 26 (N 7, mean 25.2). Lamellae under fourth toe 23-27 (N 6, mean 24.5), each with a narrow callus or obtuse keel.

Ground colour of back and sides very dark brown, becoming paler and more reddish on head and neck and much paler on tail. Wide blackish brown vertebral stripe from nape to base of tail, edged by white paravertebral line (which on tail becomes buffy and broader and soon merges with its opposite number). A dorsal series of white dots or short dashes between paravertebral and dorsolateral lines. White dorsolateral line from above temples to tail, on which it becomes buffy and broader. Upper lateral zone enclosing a series of white dots. Narrow white midlateral stripe well developed posteriorly but breaking up into a series of short dashes between foreleg and ear aperture. Limbs longitudinally striped with dark brown.

Geographic variation

The above description is based on the Mt Linden series. Dr Greer's specimens from Cooper Creek differ in having more midbody scale rows (26 or 28, N 7, mean 26.6), fewer nuchals (1-4, N 7, mean 2.2), fewer ear lobules (4-6, N 7, mean 5.0), paler ground colour, brownish white paravertebral line and laterodorsal dashes, and midlateral stripe anteriorly wavy and not breaking up into short dashes. The Cooper Creek specimens are larger (61-65, N 7, mean 62.2), but they could be older judging from their sharper ear lobules. Possibly due to their age the Cooper Creek specimens have relatively longer tails (218-240, N 6, mean 225) and shorter limbs (foreleg 24-26, N 7, mean 25.2; hindleg 46-49, N 7, mean 47.4).

Remarks

Dr R. How of the Biological Survey tells me that the Mt Linden series was obtained on red loamy sand vegetated with mulga, mallee and spinifex. The Cooper Creek specimens inhabited the ecotone between the watercourse flats and the surrounding spinifex and shrubbery; Dr Greer also collected *Amphibolurus isolepis, A. scutulatus, Ctenotus helenae, C. schomburgkii* and *Menetia greyii* at this locality.

For descriptions of the closely related *Ctenotus leonhardii* and *C. uber* see Storr (1969).

Paratypes

Eastern Division: 9 km S of Mt Linden (WAM R65904, 65907-8, 65939-40, 65965, 65992); Cooper Creek (27°20′S, 126°21′E) (AM R49624-5, 49723, 70215-8).

REFERENCE

STORR, G.M. (1969) The genus Ctenotus (Lacertilia, Scincidae) in the Eastern Division of Western Australia. *J. Proc. R. Soc. West. Aust.* **51**: 97-109.